

***City of Morgantown***  
**Human Rights Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes October 16, 2014**

**Present:** Jan Derry, Chair  
Michael Fike  
Brian Jara  
Don Spencer, Secretary

Tim Hairston – Liaison w/ State HRC  
Bob Jones - Research Consultant

**Meeting called to order** by Jan Derry, Chair, at 6:35 p.m. The Commissioners approved the agenda without additions or corrections.

**Public Session:** No visitors attended the meeting.

**Communications:** Jan Derry reported that the Northern West Virginia Center for Independent Living has received a Fair Housing enforcement grant which is expected to uncover the presence of discrimination, assist individuals who are experiencing discrimination, and document and analyze patterns of discrimination. The amount of the grant is \$324,956 per year for three years.

Current Fair Housing issues in Morgantown relate to Metro Properties being sued by the Department of Justice for lack of compliance with Fair Housing standards since 2008. This suit will have probably implications for both the developer and the City of Morgantown which has approved development plans and provided code enforcement.

Fairness WV has reported District Court action with has overturned bans on equality in marriage. The Governor and the Attorney General have indicated that they will not resist county issuance of licenses permitting same sex marriage or other legal ways in which benefits of marriage are practiced. Two same sex marriage licenses have been recently reported issued in Monongalia County.

The Morgantown Human Rights Commission has recently been notified that Fairness WV will award the Commission its 2014 Ian Gibson-Smith Award for leadership toward ending discrimination on November 15 at 6 p.m. at the Cultural Center in Charleston. All members of the Commission are invited to attend the special annual Fairness WV event. Jan Derry and Don Spencer stated that they plan to attend. Others are invited to join the delegation.

Mike Fike reported that the City of Morgantown has received approval for restricted home rule. Communication has been received from Mayor Selin requesting that the Human Rights Commission work with the Traffic Commission on an emphasis on aging being promoted by the Milken Institute.

Secretary Don Spencer reported on two letters which have been submitted to City Hall – one letter of commendation to Susan Sullivan and the other a letter requesting reimbursement to him for display expenses incurred during the need survey. On a motion

by Jara, seconded by Mike Fike, the expense voucher to the CDBG funds for the survey was approved.

**Minutes:** On a motion by Brian Jara and seconded by Mike Fike, the minutes of the September 18, 2014 meeting were approved without dissent.

**Progress Reports:** Jan Derry agreed to check with Linda Little to be sure that the request from the Commission to have Employment and Housing Non-Discrimination bills included in the City's 2015 State Legislative priorities. Due to the absence of Fran Whiteman there was no report on the status of sharing the results of the MEI survey with the City Council and City Administration. No report was available on the status of internship planning except that Dave Bott will be meeting with the School of Public Health regarding possible internship assignment to the Commission.

Don Spencer reported on a \$25,000 endowment has been received by the WVU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for ongoing support of the annual Human Rights Film Festival. He noted that the article title was in error in that the HRC had proposed the festival before the endowment had been received. The first gift is important but it is hoped that additional funds will be able to be raised for the endowment to augment the initial gift.

Brain Jara reported progress of discussions relating to a development of a possible high school level course on civil rights history. Jan Derry identified Donna Monahan, a teacher at Morgantown High School, as a possible resource. The Teaching Tolerance Program at the Southern Poverty Law Center was also cited as a potential planning resource.

There was no report on the status of financial reports for CDBG funds.

A report on progress on the bylaws or operating policies and procedures was deferred until the next meeting. There was no report from the Committee on Diversity and Representation.

**Human Rights Need Survey Report:** Bob Jones presented a final summary report for the Human Rights Needs Survey process completed during the past 12 month. Included in his report was an announcement that the report has been accepted for presentation at the October 28 City Council Committee of the Whole meeting. The slides presented at the September meeting of the HRC will be utilized for the 10 minute presentation. The Commission made no changes to the final report document distributed in advance of the meeting.

**New Business:** Jan Derry proposed that the Commission send a letter to the MPO and DOH regarding plans for upgrading Greenbag Road. She emphasized the importance of including the Complete Streets standards in the redesign and being sure that transit services are included. By consensus, it was agreed that Derry should send a letter emphasizing accessibility and mobility rights of all persons.

On the request of the Mayor that the HRC respond to the Milken Institute, the Commissioners discussed the information available and decided to recommend that the Mayor refer the request to the Community Living Initiatives Corporation (CLIC) which is better suited to respond to the assignment to promote support for older adults. Derry stated that she would make the recommendation to the Mayor.

On the matter of preparing a presentation of a report on the Need Survey to City Council, the points which Commissioners recommended be included were:

- Point out that the Council, the HRC and community organizations all need to work together;
- Explain what the HRC will be doing next;
- Make public the findings;
- Thank the public for participating;
- Find out what the public wants to do with the findings;
- Make it clear the HRC is interested in knowing what the public wants to see done with the findings;
- Support momentum for change;
- Find groups interested in collaborating;
- Create an environment in which other people will be stepping up;
- The role of the HRC will be to be a catalyst for action;
- Support inclusivity interest – include city entrance inclusivity sign in presentation.

Regular Meeting Items: The members updated the Annual Human Rights Calendar with the following items:

- Black History Month (March)
- Women's History Month (March)
- Child Abuse Month (April)
- Disability History Week (3<sup>rd</sup> week in October)
- Domestic Violence Month (October)
- LGBT Month (October)
- Anti-Bullying Month (October)
- Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities Month (?)

There was discussion on what the Commission could do to emphasize awareness of Human Rights Day on December 10 but no final consensus was reached. It was suggested to Tim Hairston that the State Human Rights Commission might have some recommendations on how local communities could best contribute to a State-wide observance of Human Rights Day. Hairston said that he would bring the matter up at the State HRC meeting on October 17.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Don Spencer  
Secretary